

Inside Region 3

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Great Lakes, Ohio River to Benefit From Clean Vessel Act Program

Six States in Region to Share \$615,000 in Program Grants

Six states in Region 3 will receive their share of \$615,000 in federal grant funds to be used to construct facilities to dispose of sewage from recreational watercraft.

The distribution of the Clean Vessel Act (CVA) Program funds for Fiscal year 1999 projects was approved by the Service directorate April 1. States funded in Region 3 include: Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The states received about 78 percent of the \$786,000 in grants they applied for under the CVA program. Nationally, \$9.4 million was awarded, with states receiving 57 percent of amounts requested.

CVA grants are administered by the Service's Division of Federal Aid,

and are used to construct facilities, primarily pumpouts and dump stations, for proper disposal of sewage from recreational vessels. Funds are generally sub-granted by states to individual marinas for construction of these facilities. Marinas can receive up to 75 percent of the cost of installing eligible facilities.

While many Region 3

waters will benefit from construction of sewage handling facilities, Lakes Michigan and Erie will be major recipients of facilities on the Great Lakes. Among the Region's inland waters, the Ohio River will receive many of the facilities.

Some states still have uncommitted funds available. Four more years of funding cycles under the current legislation. The

program is the result of the Clean Vessel Act, a federal law that aims to eliminate sewage generated by recreational boaters from polluting America's waterways.

Anyone facilities interested in participating in this program should have them contact Jeff Gosse (612-713-5138) for reference to the appropriate state CVA coordinator. (Jeff Gosse, Federal Aid)



And the Winner is...

Barbara Pardo, assistant Joint Venture coordinator for Region 3, displays the winning entry in the Minnesota Junior Duck Stamp competition held recently at the School of Environmental Studies in Apple Valley, Minn. The painting of two lesser scaup earned Best of Show

honors for Sara Stack, 18, of Maplewood, Minn. Pardo served as judge's advisor during the Minnesota event, hosted by Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. See page 3 for more about Junior Duck Stamp competitions in Region 3. (Photo by Steve Kufrin)

Clam Poachers Sentenced in Connection With Federal Lacey Act Conviction of Mississippi Valley Shell Company

State Conservation Agencies to Share More Than \$166,000 in Restitution

A four-year investigation into the illegal freshwater mussel trade in the Midwest by Service special agents and wildlife officers from Iowa and Illinois ended recently with the sentencing in federal court of two men convicted for felony violations of the Lacey Act, the federal law that prohibits illegal trade in protected wildlife.

Donald Vizzini of Gold Hill, Ore., and Craig A. Smith of Erie, Ill., were the last of eight individuals sentenced in connection with the conviction of the Mississippi Valley Shell Company (MVS) of Muscatine, Iowa. The sentences bring the total penalties assessed to the company and individuals to \$257,750 in fines, \$166,739 in restitution, 63 months imprisonment, 34 years of probation and \$1,425 in crime victims' funds.

Vizzini was sentenced April 9 in federal court in Oregon to three years probation, 100 hours of community service and ordered to pay \$11,900 in restitution and \$50 to the crime victims' fund.

Smith was sentenced March 26 in federal court in Iowa to 31 months in prison, two years probation and ordered to pay \$28,839.75 in restitution and \$50 to the crime victims' fund. Smith also faces additional confinement of up to 105 months following his conviction for witness retaliation for assaulting one of the witnesses in the MVS case. Sentencing is set for June.

The restitution funds will be divided between the Illinois, Ohio and Minnesota departments of natural resources and the North Dakota Game and Fish Department.

The investigation began in the spring of 1995 when Illinois conservation officers learned that freshwater mussels



Popular Mussel. The threeridge mussel (*Amblema plicata*), is among the species of U.S. freshwater mussels favored by Japan's cultured pearl industry. The shells are ground into beads and inserted into oysters to produce cultured pearls. (Photo by Scott Flaherty)

were being harvested illegally from the Rock River and sold to the MVS, the second largest mussel exporter in the United States. Investigators later learned that mussels were also being taken illegally from waters closed to harvesting in Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, Michigan and Ohio and sold to MVS. The shells, which form the basis for an estimated \$5 billion international cultured pearl industry, were then laundered through Muscatine, Iowa and shipped to Japan. In addition to violating various state laws, the illegal harvests violated the Lacey Act.

Freshwater mussels are some of the most endangered species of animals in North America. Of the approximately 300 species of known mussels, 30 are already extinct and another 70 are either threatened or endangered. Due to their large size, and thickness, mussel shells from the Midwest are in great demand in Asia. Most of the shells end up in

Japan, where small pieces are cut from the shells and implanted into oysters to produce cultured pearls.

Sentences for those convicted in the case include:

Mississippi Valley Shell Company (MVS), Muscatine, Iowa, was ordered to pay a fine of \$250,000, restitution of \$40,000, five years probation and \$800 to the crime victims' fund.

MVS President Darwin Lee "Butch" Ballenger, 59, Muscatine, Iowa, was sentenced to 24 months in prison, two years probation, and ordered to pay restitution of \$40,000 and \$100 to the crime victims' fund.

MVS Vice President Cheryl Roate Ballenger, 41, Muscatine, Iowa, was sentenced to five years probation and ordered to pay a \$7,500 fine and \$25 to the crime victims' fund.

Jerry Althiser, 48, of Hillsdale, Ill., was sentenced to five years probation and ordered to pay restitution of \$5,000 and \$100 to the crime victims' fund. He is also prohibited from clamming for life.

Jeremie Cooper, 24, Patch Grove, Wis., was sentenced to eight months confinement (four months to be served in home confinement), two years probation and ordered to pay restitution of \$40,000 and \$100 to the crime victims' fund. He is also prohibited from clamming during probation.

Harry Schultz, 40, Muscatine, Iowa, was sentenced to five years probation, 120 hours of community service and ordered to pay restitution of \$1,000 and \$100 to the crime victims' fund.

Gregory Meyers, 36, Brownsville, Minn., was sentenced to five years probation, and ordered to pay \$100 to the crime victims' fund. He is also prohibited from clamming for life.



First Place. Ryan Kirby of Hamilton, Ill., won first prize at the national contest after being named Best of Show at the Illinois competition. Kirby finished fourth at last year's national competition.



Second Place. Sara Stack, 18, of Maplewood, Minn. won second place at the national contest after being named Best of Show at the Minnesota competition.



Wisconsin's Best of Show. Dan Koepsell, 16, of Waupan, Wis.



Indiana's Best of Show. Josh Combs, 18, of Greenfield Central High School, Greenfield, Ind.



State Winner. Paige Brevik, 8, of Chatfield, Minn., was one of three first place winners in Minnesota's Grade K-3 category.

Winners of Junior Duck Stamp Competition Announced

Student-Artists From Illinois and Minnesota Earn National Honors

Young wildlife artists from Region 3 states garnered the top two places at the national Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Contest held April 30 in Washington, D.C. Ryan Kirby, 16, of Hamilton, Ill., Sara Stack, 18, of Maplewood, Minn., finished first and second

respectively. Kirby placed fourth in last year's national competition. More than 3,100 entries were received from school-age artists in Illinois, Minnesota, Indiana and Wisconsin during this year's contest. The Service-sponsored competition was conducted by Muscatatuck National Wildlife

Refuge (NWR) in Indiana, Minnesota Valley NWR in Minnesota, Necedah NWR in Wisconsin, and Illinois DNR. Three winners were selected from each of four categories: Grades 10-12, 7-9, 4-6 and K-3. The Best of Show winners from each state moved on to national competition.

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Created on Seven New Islands Under Construction in Mississippi River's Pool 8

\$2.7 Million Stoddard Bay Habitat Project to Restore Habitat on 500 Acres

Construction began recently on a \$2.7 million Environmental Management Program project to restore fish and wildlife habitat on seven man-made islands on the Mississippi River just south of LaCrosse, Wis.

The Stoddard Bay Habitat Project is part of an ongoing environmental restoration project on Pool 8 of the

Upper Mississippi River. During this phase of the project, seven islands, created by sand dredged from the river, will be shaped, stabilized, covered with topsoil and seeded to native vegetation.

Staff from the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge are working with the Corps to

ensure the islands are constructed with maximum habitat benefit, cost efficiency and minimal maintenance in mind.

When completed, the Corps'-funded project will restore habitat to a 500-acre backwater complex on the Mississippi River. The project will improve the area for fish, migratory birds, and a variety of other wildlife.

Partners on the project include U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District, Minnesota and Wisconsin departments of natural resources and Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge-LaCrosse District. (*Keith Beseke, UMRNW&FR-Winona District*)



Duck And Cover. Fiberglass nest tops protect nesting waterfowl from predators. (Photo by Steve Kallin)

'Tee-Pee' Nest Tops Help Protect Mallard Nests at Windom WMD

Twenty "tee-pee" nest tops purchased with money donated by three local sportsman's groups will be placed on waterfowl nests on at Windom Wetland Management District in an effort to protect nesting waterfowl from predators during this year's nesting season.

The Cottonwood County Game and Fish League, Ducks Unlimited and North Heron Lake Game Producers donated \$1,300 to purchase the cov-

ers, which will help increase mallard production on the District's waterfowl production areas and private lands.

The fiberglass, wicker-like covers are more attractive to nesting hens and protect them from avian predators.

Users of this system in South Dakota indicate the baskets are as effective as the cylinder shaped "hen house," but may require less maintenance.

(*Steve Kallin, Windom WMD*)

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association Donates Books For Refuge's Waterfowl Education Program

About 1,000 copies of the book, "Ducks at a Distance" were recently donated to the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge-LaCrosse District, by the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association.

The books will supplement the Refuge's Ducks-on-a-Stick program. The popular waterfowl education program reached more than 6,000 people last year and continues to be one of the most popular education programs offered by Refuge staff.

The donated books will be used with youth groups to help teach waterfowl identification through hands-on learning with the Ducks-on-a-Stick. (*Mary Stefanski, UMRNW&FR-LaCrosse District*)

163 Acres Acquired From USDA; Former Agricultural Land to Become Waterfowl Production Areas

More than a decade after initial screening by Litchfield WMD staff, two parcels of land in two Minnesota counties have been fee title transferred from the USDA's Farm Service Agency to the Service's refuge system.

The two properties total 163 acres and have been owned by the USDA since 1983 and 1985, respectively. The properties were marginal from an agricultural production standpoint but will be valuable additions to the Service's system of waterfowl production areas. The Winter property consists of 120 acres in Meeker



County and the Mellies property is 43 acres in Renville County. Acquiring the acreage was not easy. Since the initial screening of the land, numerous changes in federal laws, rules and policies complicated and delayed the process.

In addition to the Litchfield staff, two Service employees were key in making the transfer a reality. Lance Kuester of St. Cloud Private Lands and Greg Brown (ARW-Private Lands) both worked hard to ensure the transfers occurred.

Both properties contain numerous wetlands and upland habitat. The uplands on the Mellies property were previously restored by Litchfield District staff as part of a caretaker agreement. Much of the upland habitat and a few small wetlands on the Winter Tract are still in need of restoration. *(Tom Bell, Litchfield WMD)*

Region's Fishery Staffs Join Forces to Plant Thousands of Lake Trout Fry in Lake Huron

Innovative Method Uses Underwater Video Camera to Locate Suitable Habitat

Several Region 3 Fisheries Offices recently collaborated to stock 200,000 lake trout fry at Spectacle Reef in northern Lake Huron.

Staff from Iron River, Pendills Creek, and Jordan River National Fish Hatcheries, and the Alpena Fishery Resources Office combined efforts to accomplish this experimental lake trout fry stocking with use of the M/V Togue. Eggs for the experiment were supplied and incubated at Pendills Creek NFH.

Thermal manipulation was employed during incubation to apply a distinct marking pattern on the otoliths so the fish can be identified if captured during subsequent lake trout assessment surveys.

A high resolution underwater video camera was used to select appropriate habitat and evaluate condition of the stocked fry. Biologist and technicians from the Alpena Fishery Resources Office designed the camera setup and

operated it during stocking. While monitoring the fry stocking with the video camera, suitable fry habitat was identified and the lake trout fry could be seen taking refuge upon release. A similar fry stocking was conducted at

Mordmere Reef in Lake Huron in April 1998. The stockings are part of on-going efforts by the Service to rehabilitate lake trout in the Great Lakes. *(Tracy D. Hill, Alpena Fishery Resources Office)*

Columbia Staff Locate and Tag Rare Pallid Sturgeon in Lower Missouri River

Staff from the Columbia Fishery Resources Office recently caught and tagged four wild and one stocked pallid sturgeon on the Lower Missouri river as part of a state and federal effort to locate the endangered species on the lower Missouri and Middle Mississippi Rivers. Seven young fish stocked by the Missouri Department of Conservation were collected in the Middle Mississippi River.

Current information on the pallid sturgeon's life history and habitat

use is limited. Data collected in this project will provide information needed to enhance sturgeon habitat and to assist the Service in its river operations consultations with the Corps of Engineers.

Partners in the effort include Nebraska Game and Parks Iowa Department of Natural Resources Missouri Department of Conservation Southern Illinois University Long Term Resources Monitoring Program - Missouri. *(Joanne Grady, Columbia Fishery Resources Office)*

Service Issues Permit to Wisconsin Town For Incidental Take of Karner Blue Butterfly

The Service has issued an incidental take permit under Section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act to the town of Rome, Wis., authorizing incidental taking of the endangered Karner Blue Butterfly in association with road reconstruction along Badger Avenue in Adams County.

The area affected includes approximately 10 acres of potential habitat for the butterfly and was determined to be a low effect HCP. The town will minimize effects on the butterfly and mitigate for the



Karner blue butterfly

proposed take. The permit is in effect through 2029. (Lisa Mandell, Ecological Services, Green Bay Field Office)

Seney Staffer Teaches Partnership Class at Northern Michigan University

Marianne Kronk, an interpretive specialist at Seney NWR, together with an employee of the U.S. Forest Service, were invited to team teach a class session on Partnerships at an outdoor recreation management course at Northern Michigan University. The 19 students and their professor learned about the Service's mission, and opportunities for recreation, internships and careers in the Refuge system and at Seney NWR. A short presentation was made to an additional class of 11 students on internship opportunities.

Accomplishment Reports Received

The following accomplishment reports were processed April 26, 1999:

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| 421. Audubon Society Meeting
Howard Phillips, Mark Twain NWR | Mary Stefanski, Upper Mississippi River NW&FR, LaCrosse District | 430. Windom WMD Participates in County Farm and Home Show
Steve Kallin, Windom NWR |
| 422. LaCrosse District Hosts Information Clinic for Wisconsin Hunters and Trappers
Mary Stefanski, Upper Mississippi River NW&FR-LaCrosse District | 425. Seney NWR Trunk Workshop for Scout Coordinators
Marianne Kronk, Seney NWR | 431. Service Program Presented to Sertoma Club
Steve Kallin, Windom NWR |
| 423. Habitat Restored: Seven New Islands Under Construction in Mississippi's Pool 8
Keith Beseke, Upper Mississippi River NW&FR, Winona District | 426. Windom District Staff and Volunteers Focus on Wetlands at Multi-County Water Festival
Steve Kallin, Windom NWR | 432. Great Lakes, Ohio River Benefit From FY99 Clean Vessel Act Program Funds
Jeff Gosse, Federal Aid |
| 424. Wisconsin Waterfowl Association Donates Books Refuge's Waterfowl Program | 427. State, Tribal Representatives Introduced to SAFETY Hunter Education System
Fabian Romero, Federal Aid | 433. 300 Students Attend Earth Day Educational Events at Mingo NWR
Rod Hansen, Mingo NWR |
| | 428. Windom WMD Recognizes Sportsman's Club For its Help in Wetland Restoration
Steve Kallin, Windom NWR | 434. Litchfield District Helps Manage 26-Acre City Park
Craig W. Lee, Litchfield WMD |
| | 429. 'Tee-Pee' Nest Tops Help Protect Mallard Nests at Windom WMD
Steve Kallin, Windom NWR | 435. Environmental Education at Underwood Elem. School
Chuck Vukonich, Fergus Falls WMD |

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| <p>436. 222 Hen Houses Placed at Fergus Falls WMD
Chuck Vukonich, Fergus Falls WMD</p> <p>437. Minnesota Waterfowl Association Symposium
Kevin Brennan, Fergus Falls WMD</p> <p>438. LaCrosse Conducts Spring Wild Fish Health Assessments
Becky Lassus, LaCrosse Fish Health Center</p> <p>439. New Web Site for the La Crosse Fish Health Center
Becky Lassus, LaCrosse Fish Health Center</p> <p>440. Mississippi River Wildlife Demonstrations Given to Middle School Students
Becky Lassus, LaCrosse Fish Health Center</p> <p>441. Seney Staff Teach Partnership Class at Northern Michigan University
Marianne Kronk, Seney NWR</p> <p>442. LaCrosse Staff Starts Spring Inspections at National Fish Hatcheries
Becky Laser, LaCrosse Fish Health Center</p> | <p>443. Service Acquires 163 Acres of Waterfowl Production Land From USDA
Tom Bell, Litchfield WMD</p> <p>444. Region 3 Private Land Coordinators Meet in Missouri
Kelly Wrigley Werner, Columbia Field Office</p> <p>445. Service Endangered Species Biologist Receives Award
Mark Wilson, Columbia Field Office</p> <p>446. Leopold WMD Hosts Private Lands Meeting
Rhonda Byers, Leopold WMD</p> <p>447. Volunteerisms throughout the District on the rise!!
Jim Lutes, Leopold WMD</p> <p>448. Service Finds and Tags Rare Pallid Sturgeon in Lower Missouri River
Joanne Grady, Columbia FRO</p> <p>449. Region Fishery Offices Join For Lake Trout Planting in Northern Lake Huron
Tracy Hill, Alpina FRO</p> <p>450. Service Issues Permit For Incidental Take of Butterfly to Wisconsin Town
Lisa Mandel, Ecological Services/Green Bay Field Office</p> | <p>451. Wisconsin Statewide HCP Application Received
Lisa Mandel, Ecological Services</p> <p>452. Donald G. Vizzini, Illegal Clammer, Sentenced
SA Gary Jagodzinski, LaCrosse LE Office</p> <p>453. Mark Twain Refuge Manager Discusses Habitat Rehabilitation On Radio Show
Howard Phillips, Mark Twain NWR - Brussels District</p> <p>454. Morey Fish Company Pays Fine for Lacey Act Violation
Marty S. Hernandez, Green Bay LE Office</p> <p>455. Refuge Hosts Volunteer Appreciation Dinner
Ed DeVries, Shiawassee NWR</p> <p>456. USFWS Represented at Downriver 2000 Summit
Douglas Spencer, Shiawassee NWR</p> <p style="text-align: center;">■</p> |
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Inside Region 3

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